

# YouthBuild Newark lands federal funding to expand work with juvenile ex-offenders

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Four New Jersey community agencies will share \$3.6 million in federal funds to help juvenile ex-offenders with education, job training, youth development, leadership training and community revitalization.

The grants were announced by YouthBuild Newark, which developed the model program for ex-offenders age 16-21, being funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.

In Newark, YouthBuild has particularly focused on teaching construction skills. In addition to gang- and crime-prevention, the program has placed 85 percent of its graduates in jobs or schools.

The approach "decreases the likelihood of re-offense by helping kids who are coming into adulthood develop the skills and attitudes necessary for leading a crime-free life, while at the same time, providing them with an opportunity to build and improve their community," said Lisa Macaluso of YouthBuild Newark.

That success led the Labor Department to award YouthBuild Newark the only such grant in the country last year. As director of YouthBuild Newark's intermediary office, Macaluso will oversee the process of helping other community agencies in the state use the money to implement the program.

To share in the federal funds, YouthBuild has chosen Brand New Day Inc., serving Elizabeth; Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Newark, serving Jersey City; Covenant House, serving Atlantic City, and St. Paul's Community Development Corporation, serving Passaic.

Without such a targeted program the participants "could fall through the cracks of the justice system," Macaluso said. Looking beyond New Jersey, she envisions it as a model that could be adopted by youth agencies around the country.

Founded in 2003, YouthBuild Newark serves about 150 students a year. It is affiliated with YouthBuild USA, which began in 1978 in East Harlem.

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